



# Rockport Millbrook Meadow Committee

P.O. Box 51, Rockport, MA 01966

[www.millbrookmeadow.org](http://www.millbrookmeadow.org)

*Charmaine Blanchard  
Laura Hallowell  
Shannon Mason, Vice Chair  
Barbara Sparks  
Stephanie Woolf*

*Samuel W. Coulbourn, Chair  
Marcia Lombardo, Treasurer  
Aileen Morrissey  
Frederick H. Tarr III*

## Annual Report for 2017



**Rockport High School students help with wildlife relocation. Photo by Adriane Schulze.**

Millbrook Meadow Committee, since 2012, has been working on a large project for the Town—the restoration of the four-acre parcel in downtown Rockport, adjacent to King and Beach Streets and Mill Lane. By year's end, dredging of the Mill Pond was well under way.

**History:** Wampanoag Indians were known to have lived and hunted in the Meadow when it was a marshy wetland. Richard Tarr, the first settler in Sandy Bay in 1690, built his cabin near the Meadow. The second settler, John Pool, chose the Mill Brook, which became named Davison's Run, as a source of water for a grist mill and a lumber mill.

Pool gained approval for his mill in 1702, and dug out and dammed the area which is now the Mill Pond. Tarr and Pool decided on Davison's Run as the dividing line between their two properties. For the next two centuries the Mill Pond produced ice for the Town, and the Brook and dam produced water power for mills that cut lumber, made organs, buggy seats, pianos, ground isinglass for clarifying wine and beer, and made glue. The family of George Todd donated the Pond to the Town in 1936.



***Harvesting ice on Mill Pond, 1920s***

Rockport's Garden Club gave the property now known as the Meadow to the Town in 1938. During World War II (1941-1945) the Meadow was used to plant many Victory Gardens. Right after the war it was necessary to modify Mill Brook to accommodate heavy storm drains from newly developed areas around the Boston & Maine (now MBTA) Railroad Station.

A channel was dug for the brook on the north-western border of the Meadow, and it was lined with granite blocks. In 1951 Lura Hall Phillips began efforts to save the Meadow from becoming a town parking lot, and over the next 40 years worked to protect and preserve this beautiful parkland. When she died in 1994 she left money in trust for the Meadow.

Over many decades Rockporters have enjoyed the Meadow for festivals, fairs, picnics, weddings, games and just fun. For over a century Rockporters have skated on the Mill Pond, and it was once a good place to catch fish.

The dam between the Pond and Meadow, originally built in 1702 and constructed of granite in about 1840, blew out in 2006, and was finally replaced in 2012, and it was then that the Committee and Rockport Garden Club, got together to plan a very comprehensive project to restore the area. John Sparks led this effort.

*Construction of the new dam dramatized the poor condition of the Pond and the Meadow. The Pond was filled with silt, its original eight-foot depth now reduced to four feet or less and badly clogged with aquatic plants. The Meadow was often soggy, the Brook was clogged with loose stones and debris, and several large trees were dead or dying.*

*Barbara and John Sparks led the Committee's drive to obtain funding from Town Meeting and from the Community Preservation fund. The Committee obtained \$182,245 from the Lura Hall Phillips Trust, and went to Town Meeting and townspeople voted \$60,000 in regular Town funds and \$100,000 in Community Preservation Funds (total of \$322,000) to begin the design work and detailed testing for restoration. Since late in 2013 Milone & MacBroom, a landscape architecture and engineering firm, has been at work on plans for restoration of Meadow and Pond.*

*Town Meeting in 2016 voted at Spring and Fall sessions for a total of \$600,000 from Community Preservation funds, to dredge the Mill Pond.*

**The year 2017** was devoted to fund raising, urgent work with the contractor hired in 2013 to complete plans for the restoration, assisting with permitting by government authorities, working with Joe Parisi, Director of Public Works, participation in Town festivals, removing wildlife from Mill Pond before the dredging, and finally, the dredging began. In September Town Meeting voted to borrow \$360,000 in Community Preservation funds to complete the restoration of the Meadow.

DPW put the project out to bid in July 2017, and the lowest bid came in more than \$100,000 over the Committee's budget of \$600,000. Director Parisi put the job out to bid again, this time with modifications, and one bidder offered a combination that included dredging not only Mill Pond but also Frog Pond. DPW and SumCo Environmental of Salem, MA agreed on a contract, to begin in November 2017.

MMC's Adviser for environmental subjects, Eric Hutchins, had been working on a plan for relocating wildlife in the Mill Pond before the dredging started, and in September it began with multiple days involving students from various area schools taking active part in catching fish and turtles for relocation to Loop Pond, about a mile upstream. Eric, a NOAA Marine Biologist, has been a key contributor to MMC for years. For this project he arranged for MMC to contract with Cape Ann Vernal Pond Team to do the work of setting traps, collecting wildlife, marking turtle shells, and teaching students each aspect of the operation.





**Excavator scoops out part of some 3000 tons of Sediment from Mill Pond.**

Dredging commenced in mid-November 2017 and was still in progress at year's end. The dredged materials, some 3000 tons, including about 5000 sq. ft. of cattails (*Typha latifolia*), were deposited in a laydown area in the Meadow, and then transported to a landfill. The contractor will also dredge the Frog Pond. SumCo is also rebuilding the stone edge of the Mill Pond where it has broken down over the years, and they will install a set of steps for ice skaters to use to get onto the ice when skating resumes. The Pond will be newly landscaped in spring 2018.

**Membership:** Members of Millbrook Meadow are Charmaine Blanchard, Laura Hallowell, Marcia Lombardo, Shannon Mason, Aileen Morrissey, Barbara Sparks, Ted Tarr, descendant of the founding father of Rockport, Stephanie Woolf and Sam Coulbourn. Shannon continued as vice-chair, Sam chair, and Marcia treasurer. Laura Hallowell, who has served as an expert adviser on planting, and has led the project to eliminate invasive plant species in the park has done a marvelous job tracking myriad details of this restoration project in her role as Liaison since April 2014.

**Liaison Group.** The Committee formed a special liaison group to work with the Contractor and DPW. Headed by Laura Hallowell, it includes Sam Coulbourn, Barbara Sparks, Eric Hutchins, and Gunilla Caulfield, local author and long-time friend of Lura and Trustee of the Lura Hall Phillips Trust.

**Meadow Advisers:** Frank Hassler, a long-time head of the Finance Committee and expert on municipal finance; John P. Campbell, AIA, experienced in recently completing the Community House project for the Town; Denise Donnelly, Selectwoman, is our communications adviser; Neil Emond is our nature adviser; Jamy Madeja, Esq. is our environmental law adviser; Randy Saville is our history adviser, working with William Tobin, legislative liaison, to apply for national historic park designation. Tom Mikus, formerly an executive with Exxon working on solutions to global warming, and

Paul Makowski, formerly a financial officer who helped found *USA Today* and served with other national organizations as well as Boston Public Library, are also advisers.

**Conservancy.** Since Millbrook Meadow Committee, as a town government entity, could not serve as fund raiser, the Committee created a board for the Rockport Millbrook Meadow Conservancy. This Conservancy is an independent organization, qualified to solicit donations. The Conservancy Board works closely with Millbrook Meadow Committee to provide their individual experience and expertise in the Restoration project, associated fund raising, and stewardship of the park in the future.

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Members of the Board are Dianne Anderson, formerly of the Finance Committee and many other local organizations, and long-time volunteer with Rockport Music; Tim Corrigan, Owner of Earthworks Constructors and former member of the board of Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce; Chester Clark, retired business executive, former treasurer of the Educational Foundation for Rockport and volunteer for Rockport Music; Martha Jane Coulbourn, former chair of Millbrook Meadow Committee and a long-time volunteer with Rockport Chamber Music Festival; Karl Norwood, Founder of the Norwood Group in New Hampshire, owner of property abutting the Pond and descendant of one of the early settlers of Rockport; Maura Wadlinger, retired banker and member of the Rockport Cultural Committee, and longtime volunteer with Rockport Music; Barbara Sparks, Member, Millbrook Meadow Committee, former President of Rockport Chamber Music Festival, former chair of the Planning Board; and Sam Coulbourn, ex officio.

Selectman Don Campbell, who also lives adjacent to upper Mill Brook, represents the Board of Selectmen for the Committee.

**Fund-Raising and Outreach Committee.** Shannon Mason has continued as chair of the Restoration Fund Raising and Outreach subcommittee, with Charmaine Blanchard and Sam Coulbourn as members, as well as Maura Wadlinger of the Conservancy Board. Advisers are Susan J. Gray, past president of Rockport Chamber Music Festival and veteran board member of Rockport Music; and Betsy Giannoccaro, formerly fund raiser and grants coordinator for Rockport Music. The subcommittee has arranged for Essex County Community Foundation (ECCF), a tax-exempt organization qualified to accept tax deductible contributions to receive donations.

Charmaine Blanchard worked with Christina Willcox, owner of Rockport Candle Co. to make and sell a special Millbrook Meadow Candle which yielded over \$900.00.



**Marcia Lombardo led Millbrook team with Karen and Ken Porter for fundraiser**

Marcia Lombardo worked with Karen and Ken Porter of The Fish Shack in Dock Square to put on a St. Patrick's Day Dinner that brought in \$2470.

For the second year the Conservancy gathered a group of skilled artists to make Christmas wreaths and offered them to previous donors; net funds raised were just over \$9400. Shannon Mason led the project. Christopher DeRosa, owner of Greentop LLC: New England Bamboo Co. volunteered the use of his greenhouse for the wreath makers, and Eric and Terri Sweet, real estate owners, volunteered a shop space adjacent to Shalin Liu Performance Center for a Pop Up Shop to sell wreaths and other Christmas products. Also, Carol Carlson, widow of Rockport artist Ohrvel Carlson, created greeting cards from one of his paintings of the Meadow and donated them for sale.

Since we began fundraising in 2013 we have gathered a little over \$395,000 in private donations. A listing of all donors is located on the Conservancy web site at [www.millbrookmeadow.org](http://www.millbrookmeadow.org)

In addition to mailings, the fund-raising efforts have included manning booths at the annual Acoustic Festival, Motif No. 1 Day, the Animal Relocation Day and Harvest Fest. In June Rockport Music held another gala dinner in two large tents in the Meadow.

**Plan for 2018. Meadow.** After dredging of the Frog Pond, and removal of dredged materials the Meadow will be stabilized until completion of the annual eel run at the end of September. The plan then calls for relocating Mill Brook, building a new wing wall for the Brook where water passes into the Beach Street culvert, providing electrical service and water pipes for irrigation, and revitalized landscaping. The Brook is being relocated to make it less flood-prone, friendlier for animals, aquatic plants and people. Instead of the narrow, stone-lined water course that was installed in 1946, the Brook will return to its ancient, slightly sinuous course.

**Playscape:** Barbara Sparks is working with Christopher DeRosa to prepare detailed plans for features in the park that will attract active involvement for children. The new, sinuous and eco-friendly Mill Brook will lend itself to more visits by children, and the designs envisioned complement that.

**Thanks to Rockporters**, our restoration is finally underway. We appreciate all your support, in sharing your ideas, in volunteering on cleanups, voting at Town Meetings, donating money, and all the other things you have done these past years!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "S. Coulbourn", written in a cursive style.

Samuel W. Coulbourn,  
Chairman